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and meditate that performance so truly heroic in all its progress, and taking some theme of universal interest, replete with some noble and magnanimous passion, let him paint for immortality; not the immortality of a fairy fiction, but of an epic, which may instruct as well as please the remotest generations, and cover his name and his nation with such glory, that, in ages to come, there may arise a question whether the author was called from the country, or the country from the author. The name of WALTER SCOTT has diverted me, as by a charm, from the subject I designed to touch upon, at the beginning of this letter, and it is scarcely, worth returning to it.

A. P.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

THE PEACOCK.

"How rich the Peacock! what bright glories run
From plume to plume, and vary in the sun!
He proudly spreads them to the golden ray,
Gives all his colours, and adorns the day;
With conscious state the spacious round displays,
And slowly moves amid the waving blaze."

YOUNG.

OF all the feathered inhabitants of the earth, the peacock has most peculiarly attracted the admiration of mankind. The Greek Mythologists thought him a worthy attendant on "Heaven's imperial Queen." And the great Solomon conceived it not beneath his dignity to admire this splendid bird, and while collecting around him whatever could augment his glory, we find that he gave a particular order for procuring Peacocks along with other treasures of the East. Indeed few objects seem better calculated to convey an idea of princely grandeur, and decorate

the domains of majesty. The sapphire, emerald, and topaze, seem combined with the ruby in his ever varying plumage, and even amidst the vivid glow of tropical vegetation, the peacock shines conspicuous. Over all the Southern regions of Asia, from the spicy groves of Ceylon, to the cold mountainous lands of Thibet, this bird is found in a state of liberty, but it is said, no where of greater beauty and size, than on the banks of the Ganges, where, guarded by tigers and other tremendous animals, they enjoy the permanent attachment of their female, who after six tedious weeks of patient incubation, sees rise around her an active and almost independent family of five or six young, who from having their infant wings provided with quill-feathers, accompany their mother to some elevated branch, where they rest secure, under the enfolding wings of their affectionate parent, who gives, and who receives, the most tender carresses, and not until that period when nature calls to multiply their species, and give existence to other beings, is this maternal solicitude dissolved.

If the Count de Buffon's theory could be applied to birds, that the life of an animal is only three or four times that of the period at which it arrived at a state of puberty, birds should be much shorter lived, than experience shews. Swans have been known to live to 100 years; Geese to 70 or 80; and a Goldfinch to 20. The limitation of the Peacock's life should therefore not be according to this rule, but according to that general law which seems to govern the life of birds. Yet no Peacock has yet been known in this country to exceed that of ten or twelve years. And although, like many of the productions of warm countries, it reproduces in our cold climate, it is not yet so well naturalized, as not

to have its life in some degree shortened by the severity perhaps of the winters it is obliged to endure. At about a month old, the crest begins to appear, at half a year the neck of the young cock becomes blue, but it is not until the second year that the various coloured eyes enrich his then often expanded tail, and the cock endeavours to attract the attention of the female, with a full display of his beauty. Nature, which in her productions seems to spread beauty around, and to adorn with a lavish hand, has denied to the Peahen the brilliancy of her mate, guided by that unerring wisdom, which has fitted every animal for its mode of life, (which colours the timid hare like the winter-blasted fern, and the woodcock like the fallen leaf,) has coloured her in uniformity to the ground on which she is destined to pass so much of her time; and to this homely colouring she is in all likelihood indebted for her safety, from her quick-sighted enemies, while engaged in her maternal duties.

In this country, even while young, they are by no means tender, and when they are left to their mother's care, she feeds them with indefatigable attention, with flies and other insects.—Linnæus says, that Peafowl are poisoned by eating of the common elder, and it has been observed, that wherever that plant abounds, few young have ever been reared; when reared, they seem to bid defiance to the storm, and the severest weather of our climate, scarce ever forces them from the house-top, a situation which they seem particularly to delight in, and from which, when the lightning flashes and the thunder rolls, they join their voices, seemingly wishing, like small song-birds, to contend for mastery, and by their loud and repeated cries, to overpower their opponent. They are often sub-

ject to sore-feet, a disorder perhaps first generated by cold, and afterwards perpetuated from generation to generation. And as if, however, to prevent our pleasure in possession of this beautiful creature from being without alloy, some bad qualities lurk under this fair exterior; the Peafowl are the tyrants of the farm-yard, they follow with never-ceasing persecution whatever fowl is their inferior in strength, and with those which are able to contend with them, they wage eternal war. The garden also, without strict attention to expel them on their first attempts at entrance, exhibits daily marks of their depredations.

Cælian mentions, that "the Peacock was at Athens shown for a stated price to both men and women who were admitted to the spectacle, at the feasts of new moon. Considerable sums were thus collected, and many, through curiosity, came from Lacedæmon and Thessaly."—"The date of this cannot be fixed, but it was after the return of Alexander from India. The conqueror was so much delighted with the rich plumage of the Peacocks, that he enacted severe penalties against killing them."—"After the Peacock was transplanted from Asia into Greece, it found its way into the south of Europe, and gradually was introduced into France, Germany, and Switzerland, and as far as Sweden."

At what period they were brought to Ireland, cannot now be determined, it is however probable that they were brought to Britain by the Romans, and from thence transferred to Ireland, but the hand which added this beautiful bird to our domestic animals, and his name, as his whose patient industry reclaimed the first barren waste, is concealed under the veil of time, leaving us only the power to imitate their deeds.

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